

# Department of Human Services

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## Articles in Today's Clips Wednesday, October 10, 2007

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Wednesday, October 10, 2007

Detroit News Opinion

## Expanding kids care won't socialize medicine

Matthew M. Davis

Since when does a bill to extend a successful government-sponsored program with bipartisan support end up in the wastebasket in the Oval Office? Since SCHIP, apparently.

President Bush last week vetoed renewal and expansion of the successful State Children's Health Insurance Program, or SCHIP. The program has strong bipartisan support not only in Congress, but from Democratic and Republican governors, whose states share the financing for the program with Washington.

In its 10-year history, the program has helped reduce the proportion of U.S. children who are uninsured 24 percent. This is extraordinary, coming at a time when fewer and fewer employers are offering affordable health care plans to their employees. Michigan's version of the program, called MiChild, has been even more successful than the national average, contributing to a 38 percent reduction in the lack of insurance among children.

But Bush has vetoed the bill, arguing that allowing states to expand the program's eligibility to children of incomes above 200 percent of poverty is tantamount to "socialized medicine."

The truth is that the American public doesn't see the program's expansion as a step down the road toward socialized medicine. Coverage for most uninsured kids they like. But coverage for most uninsured adults? Many Americans are not ready to go there.

### Take note of poll results

Those are the findings from the most recent CS Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health from the University of Michigan, which provide key details about Americans' support for health insurance coverage for children and adults at the national level. Public support for children's coverage is strong: 83 percent of adults say the government should provide coverage for children in the family with income at 200 percent of poverty, and 64 percent say they support government coverage for children at 300 percent of poverty.

These data are consistent with other polls that have measured high levels of support for broad health insurance coverage for children.

Nonetheless, President Bush and other skeptics needn't worry that the public is running headlong to embrace government-sponsored health insurance for everyone.

The fact is that your neighbors and mine distinguish who they favor as beneficiaries of government coverage. In the same national poll from the CS Mott Children's Hospital, 56 percent support government coverage for uninsured parents at 200 percent of poverty; while 35 percent say they support government coverage for uninsured parents at 300 percent of poverty.

Although these levels of public support exceed what most states already provide to parents under SCHIP, they fall well short of the levels of endorsement for children's coverage.

Bottom line: Americans today view government health coverage for children as fundamentally distinct from coverage for their parents and other nonelderly adults. Because the vast majority of uninsured Americans are non-elderly adults, this amounts to a generation gap in public attitudes about government-sponsored generosity.

This gap may be a daunting obstacle for major coverage reforms in the near future that rely heavily on expanded government coverage. Perhaps this sentiment will change if the ranks of the uninsured continue to grow, as they have for several years.

In the continuing debate about SCHIP reauthorization, the program's supporters in Congress can rest assured that their votes will enjoy broad public support for kids who will benefit from the program in the future. Bush, meanwhile, can relax because even a more robust and successful SCHIP of the future may not pave the near-term road toward broader coverage for adults, "socialized" or otherwise.

Dr. Matthew M. Davis is associate professor of pediatrics, internal medicine and public policy at the University of Michigan Medical School and Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy. He is also director of the CS Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health. E-mail comments to [letters@detnews.com](mailto:letters@detnews.com).

Wednesday, October 10, 2007

Detroit News Editorial rebuttal

## **Bush supports health care plan for needy kids**

President Bush strongly supports the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) as a way to help children whose families cannot afford private health insurance but do not qualify for Medicaid. In fact, since February, he has been calling for a 20 percent increase in funding for the program.

Unfortunately, legislation passed by Congress expands this important safety net far beyond its intended purpose ("Congress should fix children's health plan," Oct. 4). It would encourage middle class families -- some earning more than \$80,000 per year -- to move their children from private health insurance to this public assistance program. This expansion of government-run health care is financed by imposing new taxes on those who can least afford it.

We have a better idea. First, let's find and enroll the 500,000 kids already eligible for SCHIP who haven't signed up. Then let's make health insurance more affordable for all Americans.

For starters, Bush wants to give every American family a \$15,000 tax break for purchasing health insurance. According to the Lewin Group, the president's plan would allow nearly 20 million more Americans to obtain health insurance.

The administration is committed to working with Congress to renew the SCHIP program for the truly needy and make health coverage more affordable and available to all Americans.

*Tevi D. Troy*

*Deputy Secretary*

*U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*

*Washington, D.C.*

Grand Rapids Press

Letters to the Editor

October 10, 2007

## **Override Bush veto**

President Bush and his war department are requested nearly \$190 billion to continue the war in Iraq for just one more year! They got \$150 billion. At the same time, he vetoes a bill that would extend health care for millions of American children for the next five years at a cost of \$7 billion per year. He is vetoing this because this is "excessive spending." This clearly demonstrates the priorities of our present government.

Goodness knows our government cannot help maintain the health of our children or our citizens because we are busy enriching the war profiteers and arms merchants. This dichotomy should wake us all up. We the taxpayers do not count. Our children do not count. Money is what counts.

Congressmen Hoekstra and Ehlers should vote for the American people and override Bush's veto. Health care is the number one concern of all our country.

-- STAN ROTH/Jenison



## Bush subtracts only from poor

FLINT JOURNAL LETTER TO THE EDITOR

**MT. MORRIS**

**THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION**

Wednesday, October 10, 2007

### Journal Reader

If President Bush is going to veto the State Children's Health Insurance Program on the basis it includes people who can afford to pay for private health care, then why doesn't he also veto tax cuts for multimillionaires?

Using this formula, one would have to wonder why John Henry, multimillionaire owner of the Boston Red Sox who recently purchased a \$16-million home he plans to tear down just to get the property it sits on, would need a tax cut.

Robin Neff

Mt. Morris

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# Granholt hints she may back Clinton Gov. slams candidates who snubbed state primary

*October 10, 2007*

By CHRIS CHRISTOFF  
FREE PRESS LANSING BUREAU

LANSING -- Gov. Jennifer Granholm said today she will endorse a Democratic presidential candidate next week, and hinted it may be Hillary Clinton.

Granholm said she is "very disappointed in the candidates who chose to abandon Michigan" referring to the four or five candidates who announced Tuesday they would not campaign in Michigan because of its early primary.

Granholm said she would not back down from the Jan. 15 primary date in defiance of the National Democratic Party's rules. The party has threatened sanctions against Michigan and Florida for attempting to precede New Hampshire and Iowa in the nomination process.

Those who would remove their names from Michigan's primary ballot did so because "they were attempting to convince voters in Iowa and New Hampshire that they're more loyal to Iowa and New Hampshire than the other states," Granholm said.

Clinton has said she would keep her name on the ballot in Michigan.

**Granholm commented after a media roundtable with state health care industry representatives and a few Democratic legislators who urged four of Michigan's Republican U.S. House members to override President George W. Bush's veto of an expansion of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP).**

**Granholm and U.S. Sen. Debbie Stabenow, DMich., said they are targeting House members like Mike Rogers, Tim Walberg, Joe Knollenberg and**

**Peter Hoekstra. They said three U.S. House Republicans -- Candice Miller, Vern Ehlers and Fred Upton -- would vote to override the veto. The vote to override Bush's veto is expected by next week.**

**Granholm said the SCHIP program would allow Michigan to provide basic health care for 80,000 more children in working families.**





## Child sex admitted

Wednesday, October 10, 2007

GRAND RAPIDS -- A man once named a child care center's employee of the month has pleaded guilty to sexually assaulting a 4-year-old girl. Matthew James Eggleston pleaded guilty to first-degree criminal sexual conduct in exchange for prosecutors dropping another charge and recommending a jail sentence of five to 15 years. Eggleston worked with 3- and 4-year-olds in a pre-kindergarten program, according to officials at Milestones Child Development Center, 5070 Cascade Road SE. He was working toward his teaching certificate at Grand Rapids Community College. Police believe more than one child was abused, but the guilty plea avoids forcing children to testify in court. He is scheduled to be sentenced Nov. 13.

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Detroit Free press

Macomb County news briefs

*October 10, 2007*

## **COUNTYWIDE: Sex crime suspect strangled himself**

A federal prosecutor from Florida who was accused of flying to Michigan to have sex with a 5-year-old girl in Macomb County hanged himself with a sheet tied to a shower head at the federal prison in Milan, the Washtenaw County Medical Examiner's Office says.

It reports that J.D. Roy Atchison, 53, was found unresponsive in his cell. He was declared dead at 10:17 a.m. Friday in the emergency room at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital in Ann Arbor. It listed the cause of death as asphyxiation due to suicide.

The U.S. Bureau of Prisons said Tuesday it is reviewing the death to determine if its policies or procedures were violated.

MT. CLEMENS

**Judge sides with molester**

Man can keep living near park where kids play

October 10, 2007

BY STEVE NEAVLING

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

A Mt. Clemens man who molested his daughter four years ago won a battle Tuesday to live within 3 blocks of a park frequented by children.

An elated David Randazzo left the courtroom of Macomb County Circuit Judge John Foster, who criticized a condition of Randazzo's probation that barred him from living within 1,000 feet of all parks, playgrounds, public swimming pools and other places populated primarily by children.

**Advertisement**

Foster said the terms were too restrictive. Under state law, the only requirement is that sex offenders live at least 1,000 feet away from a school, but Macomb County officials often add other restrictions.

"I believe the judge understood my plight," said Randazzo, 52, who moved into an apartment 575 feet from Lawndale Park four weeks ago. "I have to have a place to live. ... Everyone needs a break and a place to live."

Randazzo said upset neighbors have forced him to move at least 17 times since he was convicted of fondling his 12-year-old daughter's breasts and exposing himself to her. Court records show only 12 moves.

Macomb County Assistant Prosecutor Rebecca Oster said requiring 1,000 feet between a house and park is a common part of probation for Macomb County sex offenders.

"My concern is that" Randazzo "has exposed himself before, and he lives near a place where he could commit that crime again," Oster said.

Children frolicked on the grass and playground equipment at Lawndale Park on Tuesday evening. Neighbors across the street said they were upset by Foster's decision.

"You have to be worried nowadays," said Marilyn Johnson, whose 15 grandchildren use the park. "When the grandkids go to the park, I go with them."

When Randazzo was first sentenced to probation, he was required to live only 500 feet away from parks and other areas populated by children. But last year, at the request of prosecutors, a circuit court judge doubled that distance.

"For no reason on the face of the Earth, it was changed from 500 feet to 1,000 feet," Foster said.

Macomb County Prosecutor Eric Smith called the ruling repugnant.

"Judge Foster clearly cares more about the needs of sex offenders than he does about the safety and security of our county's children," he said in a statement. "It's a slap in the face to every Macomb County parent who takes children to that park."

Contact **STEVE NEAVLING** at 586-469-4935 or [sneavling@freepress.com](mailto:sneavling@freepress.com).

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## Sex offender can stay put; prosecutor blasts decision

### Judge Foster says law unclear on parks

By Frank DeFrank  
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

A registered sex offender won't have to move from his Mount Clemens apartment after a judge decided Tuesday he did not violate terms of his probation.

As a result, David Randazzo, who said he's moved 17 times in the past 18 months, will remain in his residence, despite its location less than 1,000 feet from a public park.

"I've got to have a place to live," said Randazzo, 52, who's been on probation since 2003 after he pleaded no contest to charges he fondled a 13-year-old relative. "The judge knows I'm not a threat ... I've only got seven or eight months (probation) to go."

Macomb County Prosecutor Eric Smith blasted the ruling and accused Macomb County Circuit Judge John Foster of caring "more about the needs of sex offenders than he does about the safety and security of our county's children."

At issue is the location of the apartment where Randazzo moved about four weeks ago. The original terms of his probation, which mirrored state law, forbade Randazzo from living within 500 feet of a school or other location where children congregate. But the law was revised in 2006 to set the limit at 1,000 feet.

While Randazzo's apartment is outside the school limit, his home is about 575 feet from Lawndale Park. When he learned from his probation officer that he might have to move, Randazzo petitioned Foster for relief.

Foster said the state law lacks specificity with regard to parks, and probation department officials unilaterally changed conditions of Randazzo's probation "for no reason on the face of the Earth."

"The probation department just did this willy nilly," the judge said.

Foster also said Macomb County Circuit Judge Mark Switalski signed an order in April 2006 that reinstated the original conditions of Randazzo's probation.

The judge also noted that Community Mental Health officials assisted Randazzo in finding the apartment.

But Macomb County Assistant Prosecutor Rebecca Oster said probation department officials were correct when they amended the conditions of Randazzo's probation. The law, she said, was designed to apply to any locations "where children congregate."

"The main point is where there are children," Oster said. "They applied the same restrictions (as the law)."

Oster said she'll consult with her superiors to determine whether the prosecutor's office will appeal.



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Published October 7, 2007

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## Safety net: Agency finds homes for older kids

By MARY JO WHITE  
Lansing Community Newspapers

DELTA TWP. — Like most young adults 18-year-old Eaton Rapids High School graduate Kasandra Sills relishes her independence. Even though she's working two jobs she said she knows she's still not quite ready for all the responsibilities of the real world.

Most kids would turn to parents or grandparents for help, advice and a place to live. Sills can't. She's been in the state foster care system since she was 14, and has attended three schools since middle school. She says her mom had an abusive boyfriend and was using drugs.

Sills longed for some independence before her 18th birthday, saying she'd outgrown her last foster home.

It was a tricky balance to find.

"I didn't want anybody breathing down my neck" she says. "But I wanted to move out with a little bit of guidance."

Enter Joni Kosloski, a 50-year-old Michigan Department of Information Technology employee and mother of two with room to spare in her Holt home. Her older daughter Tara, 20, has her own place. Nineteen-year-old Molly lives at home.

Together Kosloski and Sills are part of the Supervised Independent Living (SIL) program through Lutheran Social Services in Lansing designed to help foster kids ages 16 to 20 bridge the gap to successful adult living.

Without help these young adults often show up in homeless shelters, jails and hospitals, according to Lesley Simpson, SIL program manager. They're also more likely than their peers to become pregnant or drop out of school.

"What would you do if you turned 16 and had no parents to help you learn how to live completely on your own?" Simpson asks.

"They have to be pretty highly motivated" Simpson says. "They have to be able to follow rules and have to demonstrate to their foster care worker that they can set goals and achieve them."

Sills receives about \$550 each month from the Michigan Department of Human Services. She pays Kosloski \$200 to rent her own room on the lower floor of the home. The rest of the money is budgeted for groceries and other necessities with the help of her caseworker.

"I always wanted a house full of kids" Kosloski confesses, adding that she obtained a foster care license a while ago but had never received a placement. She has had teenage friends of her daughters living with her off and on too something she remembers as "very very challenging" at times. In contrast she describes the six months since Sills moved in as "an awesome experience."

Sills says it was hard at first to keep track but budgeting got easier after months in the program.

House rules are few. Clean up the kitchen after yourself is one. Don't keep Kosloski awake at night is another.

"It's a win-win situation" Kosloski says. "She hasn't really needed a mentor and it's like we're just roommates."

It's also a relationship built on trust. In fact Kosloski says she and her daughter went on a trip and had no trouble leaving Sills to take care of the house and the family's four dogs.

Molly Kosloski said she likes having Sills in the house, especially since her older sister left home. "The company is really nice" she says.

Sills has a lot of plans. She hopes to take cosmetology classes open a full-service bridal salon someday. There's a boyfriend in the picture and she says they're "saving up for a wedding."

Whatever happens Sills said she intends to stay involved in some way with the foster care system. "I was there because my mom made a bad decision" she says. "I want to use what happened to me to help others."

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Randazzo, who still denies the allegations brought against him, is happy he'll stay put for a while. While the frequent moves weren't forced by authorities, Randazzo said threats and petitions from neighbors made it known he wasn't welcome in most places he's lived.

"I'm not going to be a problem," he said.

About two hours after the hearing concluded, Smith distributed a statement critical of Foster's ruling.

"I am outraged that Judge Foster is letting a convicted child molester live next to a public park where children play," he wrote in the e-mailed statement.

"... His ruling here bends over backwards to accommodate the wishes of a man who sexually abused his own (relative). It's a slap in the face to every Macomb County parent who takes children to that park.

"This repugnant ruling is the latest in a long line of upside-down decisions from this court," Smith concluded. "Sex offenders everywhere should hope and pray to get Foster as their judge."

Foster declined to respond to Smith's statement.

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Article published Oct 10, 2007

Richmond woman claims abuse before stabbing

Husband admitted trying to kill wife at least two times

By SHANNON MURPHY  
Times Herald

**RICHMOND-** A city woman charged with fatally stabbing her husband on Sept. 13 told police he had verbally and physically assaulted her for several months.

In police reports released Tuesday, Fayette Nale, who is charged with second-degree murder, claimed her husband, Michael, was having an affair and that she feared for her life when she was with him.

According to the reports, which don't include the Sept. 13 911 call, Michael Nale admitted that he tried to kill Fayette, 54, on at least two occasions. He told police that Fayette had several illnesses, and he tried to help "end her suffering."

One time, Michael told police he planned to help Fayette commit suicide with a handgun, but they changed their minds.

"In addition, Michael admitted that he was having a difficult time watching his wife suffer due to her medical conditions," one report says. "Michael stated that he recently mixed all her prescription medications up in an attempt to cause her death."

Police were called to the Nales' Quail Trail home six times between April 12 and July 7. Two police reports were generated from the calls.

Michael Nale was charged with domestic assault for a June 23 incident during which Fayette told police he came into her bedroom, yelled at her and assaulted her, causing her to cut her ear on the edge of the bed.

Although Michael denied assaulting his wife in the police report, he pleaded guilty in July to the misdemeanor assault charge. The case was then closed, and he was not sentenced.

The four visits to the Nales' home during which police reports were not taken - April 12, April 15, June 9 and July 7 - were to check on Fayette's well-being.

Fayette changed her statements many times throughout the reports. At one time, she told police "the majority of the cuts and bruising on her arms were done by a divine power and made reference to the stigmata."

Michael Nale said "(Fayette) is constantly making up stories about him and making him do things he doesn't want to do."

Joseph McCarthy Jr., the lead prosecutor on Fayette's case in Macomb County, and Richmond police Chief Dennis Privette, declined to talk about the police reports.

Gail Pamukov, a lawyer representing Fayette, also declined to discuss the case.

"It's in the early process of collecting a lot of information," she said. "We believe she's innocent."

A status hearing to discuss the state of discovery is scheduled for today in Macomb County's 42nd District Court in Romeo. Fayette Nale's preliminary examination is scheduled for sometime in December.

She is being held in the Macomb County Jail in Mount Clemens without bond.

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# ClickOnDetroit.com

## Police: Man Terrorizes Ex-Girlfriend, Grandparents

POSTED: 5:28 pm EDT October 9, 2007

UPDATED: 6:25 pm EDT October 9, 2007

**DETROIT --** A man was arraigned after police said he terrorized and stalked an elderly couple in their Detroit home on Hubbell Street after their granddaughter and the man broke up.

"He is terrorizing us and trying to get to her," said the woman's grandma, Leslie Brown.

Jason March Banks, 23, faces various charges ranging from domestic abuse, violation of personal protection order and terrorism over the Internet.

Police said Banks violated the Personal Protection Order that was placed against him after he terrorized his ex-girlfriend Kendra Lumpkin and her grandparents by throwing rocks at their home, sending at least 36 pages of threatening e-mails and throwing glass bottles at the home with letters inside, and breaking into the Brown's home.

The message inside of the bottle said, "When I get out of jail, I will kill you."

Banks was recently released from jail on probation violation charges.

Banks told the Brown family that he lived in a hard-to-reach area in their attic for two weeks while waiting to catch a glimpse of Lumpkin.

"I kept seeing his shadow go across, then I open the top, and there he was climbing up on top of the roof," said Brown.

Banks mother told Local 4 News that her son sent her a note and a picture that said he didn't want to live. He drew picture of a gravesite with his ex-girlfriend's initials on the tombstone.

The Brown family said they were living in fear and they sent Lumpkin to a safe house while Brown was at-large.

Thursday, the day after Brown sent the bottle with the message, the Brown's said they were forced to flee their home.

Brown continued to send e-mails to the elderly couple after they left, saying "I am going to kill you, you are going to burn."

He said that if the elderly couple did not return to their home, he was going to burn it down.

An acquaintance told the police that Banks used the computers at Wayne State University's library to send the emails.

Police arrested Banks at the WSU library while they said he was sending the elderly couple a threatening e-mail.

Prosecutors said the terrorism over the Internet may become a federal charge.

Banks remains in custody and will return to court Oct. 26 for a preliminary trial.

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**Video: Man Stalks Ex-Girlfriend's Grandparents**

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Wednesday, October 10, 2007

## **Hunger increasing; please donate to food banks**

It's fall and for many of us that means an abundance of fresh produce. But today, nearly one in nine people in our community are hungry part or all of the month. Missed meals and ongoing searches for supplemental food can become a dominating focus for children, parents and seniors.

Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes has seen a continuous increase in the need for emergency food by people in Kalamazoo County. Volunteers and staff have distributed record amounts of food through our pantries. During June, July and August we provided 21.8 percent more "days of emergency food" than in the same period of 2006.

Despite generous donations, stocks of staples and fresh food at our warehouse are at record lows and, looking ahead, we anticipate shortages because of increasing demands.

You can donate food and money to all Michigan food banks through the Food Banks Council of Michigan Web site, [www.fbcmich.org](http://www.fbcmich.org). To donate directly to KLF, visit our Web site at [www.kzoolf.org](http://www.kzoolf.org).

Food donations are distributed directly to hungry individuals and families through our volunteer-run food and mobile pantries.

We hope you will help restock the KLF warehouse and support our efforts to provide this vital resource -- food -- to our neighbors of all ages.

Anne Wend Lipsey  
Executive Director,  
Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes

## PREPARING FOR WINTER

# Natural gas cost expected to rise

## But heating bills won't change much, report says

*October 10, 2007*

**BY ALEJANDRO BODIPO-MEMBA**

FREE PRESS BUSINESS WRITER

Natural gas prices are expected to be slightly higher this winter, but Michigan consumers won't see much of a change in their heating bills, according to a report expected to be released today.

The latest energy appraisal study from the Michigan Public Service Commission says that the state's energy supply will be sufficient to meet a modest increase in demand that is expected in the coming months. Based on a natural gas price increase of about 2% this winter, typical residential customers can expect to pay the following amounts to heat their homes between November and March:

- Michigan Consolidated Gas Co. (MichCon): an average of \$144 a month compared with \$143 last year.
- Consumers Energy, the largest natural gas provider: about \$153 a month, the same as last year.
- SEMCO Energy: around \$149 a month, compared with \$154 last year.
- Michigan Gas Utilities: an average of \$129 a month this winter compared with \$151 last year. There also is a chance Michigan customers will be pleasantly surprised when they open their gas bills in the coming months.

The National Weather Service is forecasting that temperatures in the Great Lakes region will be warmer than normal this winter, which could result in even lower heating bills.

That's good news for Jay Gregory, pastor of Faith Covenant Fellowship Church in Eastpointe.

Gregory recently had a new furnace installed in a home owned by the church that will eventually become a children's nursery.

"With the economic times we're experiencing, we have to try and cut costs wherever we can," said Gregory, who ministers to about 600 people. "Energy efficiency is something we address in the pulpit."

While he isn't sure of how much he will save from installing the new equipment -- the home wasn't used much last winter -- Gregory says that taking action now could save money down the line.

"We talk about making sure that your windows are good, you have good insulation in your house," he said.

Detroit-based MichCon, a unit of DTE Energy, has 1.2 million natural gas customers in southeast Michigan.

Consumers Energy, the Jackson subsidiary of CMS Energy, provides gas to about 1.7 million customers throughout Michigan's Lower Peninsula.

SEMCO Energy of Port Huron has more than 400,000 gas customers in Michigan and Alaska. Monroe-based Michigan Gas Utilities, formerly Aquila, serves 162,000 residential customers around Grand Haven, Otsego, Benton Harbor, Coldwater and Monroe.

Michigan is faring better than much of the country.

Nationally, residential gas customers can expect to pay 10% more to heat their homes this year due to the escalating costs of heating oil, which is used primarily in the northeast.

However, natural gas prices have leveled off considerably this year.

Natural gas prices averaged between \$7.47 per 1,000 cubic feet and \$8.24 per 1,000 cubic feet between February and June, but dropped later in the year, averaging between \$6.35 and \$6.40 per 1,000 cubic feet between July and September.

About 79% of all Michigan households use natural gas to heat their homes, while propane, heating oil and electricity make up 10%, 4% and 7%, respectively.

"This year, it's a return to business as usual for natural gas utilities and their customers," said Chris McGill, managing director, policy analysis of the American Gas Association in Washington, D.C. "The business of a natural gas utility is to provide reliable supplies at an affordable price to its customers throughout the winter, and all indications are that utilities are going to conduct that business very well this year."

Another advantage Michigan has is that the utilities in the state have significant amounts of gas in storage that helps keep costs down.

Officials at Consumers Energy said they have about 97% of their anticipated need for the winter in the 15 natural gas storage facilities across Michigan. MichCon also has significant reserves set aside for the winter. Contact **ALEJANDRO BODIPO-MEMBA** at 313-222-5008 or [abodipo@freepress.com](mailto:abodipo@freepress.com).

## Tips on lowering your winter heating bill

Michigan Consolidated Gas Co. and Consumers Energy have several recommendations:

- Lower the thermostat temperature. For every degree one lowers a thermostat temperature, a household can save about 3% on a monthly heating bill.
- Maintain the furnace. Homeowners and renters should clean or replace the furnace air filters throughout the winter season. Dirty filters block the warm airflow in the home and can cause the furnace to function less efficiently.
- Add insulation. Consider installing insulation in the attic and basement of the home to keep out drafts and make the house more energy efficient.
- Seal windows and doors. Use caulk and weather stripping to block unwanted drafts from entering the house.
- Use the sun. Open curtains on south-facing windows during the day to allow sunlight to naturally heat the home. Close the curtains at night to reduce the chill from cold windows.

For more information on saving money on winter heating bills, go to [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov).

*By Alejandro Bodipo-Memba*

## **Where to get heating bill assistance**

Even with Michigan's utilities being better prepared than in previous years, the state's sluggish economy continues to threaten the prospects of middle- and low-income families, regardless of the price of natural gas.

Michigan recently was awarded \$5.8 million from the federally funded Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program.



## Rescue Mission will wrap up centennial year

Wednesday, October 10, 2007

**By Susan Harrison Wolffis**

**susanharrison@muskegonchronicle.com**

For the past year, the Muskegon Rescue Mission has celebrated its 100 years of service to the community.

On Monday, supporters of the mission will wrap up their centennial celebration of banquets, speakers and special music at a "Reflections Banquet" at First Baptist Church, 1070 S. Quarterline.

"We're closing out our first 100 years," said Carla Skoglund, executive director of the mission. "We're ready to start a new century after this celebration."

But first, banquet-goers will be treated to a history lesson of sorts in 25-year increments about the mission, the world's news and music of the times.

The times may have changed, Skoglund said, but not the ministry.

From the day the City Rescue Mission -- now called the Muskegon Rescue Mission -- opened its doors in downtown Muskegon, it has provided food, shelter and clothing as part of a ministry "that proclaims God's love to the less fortunate and homeless people of West Michigan," Skoglund said.

In the fall of 1906, a group of civic and business leaders decided to open a mission in direct response to Muskegon's unemployment woes. Men who'd lost their jobs when the lumber industry collapsed were going homeless and hungry. At the mission, they could find a meal and bunk for the night.

The only requirement? They had to listen to a sermon delivered by the mission's first superintendent, the Rev. William Van Domelin, who served from 1907 to 1920.

Then as now, Skoglund said, the intent was to "rescue, redeem, restore and rebuild" lives.

Currently housed in two buildings, the Rescue Mission can shelter 44 men at 400 Laketon and up to 65 women and children a night at 1691 Peck. But it feeds even more than those numbers. The kitchens are open every noon and night to people who have places to stay but no food.

The Rescue Mission, which includes two thrift shops, operates on an annual budget of "just under" \$2 million, according to Skoglund, all of which is donated locally. It receives no federal or state grants.

Besides food, clothing and shelter, in addition to spiritual counseling and classes, the mission offers programs in money management, life skills, parenting and job searches.

Aside from those programs, there is a family ministry offered to provide basic necessities such as food, clothing, furniture and some financial assistance.

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# THE BAY CITY TIMES

## Homestead tax credit can cut costs for low-income residents

Wednesday, October 10, 2007

By **RYAN J. STANTON**

**TIMES WRITER**

"My taxes are too high," is a phrase oft uttered by residents living on fixed incomes in Bay City, home to one of the highest tax rates in all of Michigan.

But it's no reason to vote down the library millage on Nov. 6, says Bay County Executive Thomas L. Hickner.

Hickner says those who truly can't afford to pay for a library millage, frankly, won't - not even if it's approved.

Hickner, a library millage supporter, says low-income residents who want their libraries open - but not at the cost of higher taxes - should look to the Homestead Property Tax Credit.

For those who qualify - household income must be less than \$82,650 - the Homestead credit doesn't allow your taxes to climb higher than 3.5 percent of your income.

"For senior citizens, and low- and moderate-income households that currently are eligible and receive the Homestead Property Tax Credit ... they would not be paying anything more in property taxes for the library millage," Hickner said. "It would be picked up by the state of Michigan under this program."

For example, somebody with a yearly income of \$18,000, living in an \$80,000 home in Bay City, would pay \$630 a year in taxes with the Homestead credit.

Without the credit, the same person now pays nearly \$1,800 in taxes, based on Bay City's Homestead tax rate of 44.6 mills.

Savings: Nearly \$1,200.

The Homestead credit is available to both homeowners and renters. It is mainly designed to give property tax relief to senior citizens, disabled and blind people, as well as disabled veterans and their surviving spouses.

Yet many other Michigan residents also may qualify if their household income is less than \$82,650, said Amy Doornhaag, Bay City's assessor. She agrees that those who truly can't afford higher taxes don't need to fear voting "yes" to restore library services.

"We see a lot of those people that don't have a clue to file that, to get that \$1,200 from the state," she said. "You can recover a good portion of your taxes if you qualify."

Doornhaag recommends seniors and low-income residents take advantage of free tax-preparation services to see if they qualify for the credit. The United Way of Bay County is happy to arrange such services if you call 893-7508 or 893-6060.

Library officials note that many of the votes against renewing the millage in the last two elections have come from absentee ballots, which typically are cast by seniors on limited or fixed incomes.

Patti Shorkey, deputy county clerk, said local clerks throughout Bay County will be sending out absentee ballots anytime now. Bay City is sending them this week.

Kay Kube, a local volunteer tax preparer, said the county's seniors are mainly the people she helps file for the Homestead credit each year. As far as the cost of the library millage, she too agreed "they'll probably get it back in a tax refund."

Kube stresses that even those who rent apartments can get the Homestead credit and get a refund.

"Your low-income people always get a credit back from that," she said.

"If you pay \$500 rent for

12 months, that's \$6,000, and 20 percent of that is considered property tax," she said, adding that the figure is

10 percent for subsidized housing.

Out of nearly 46,000 people who voted on the library millage last November, the four-year, 1.2-mill levy failed to get renewed by less than 200 votes. Library leaders say they don't consider that a definitive "no," which is partly why they're going back to voters - this time asking for a lesser, 1-mill levy to last three years.

The tax would cost the owner of an \$80,000 home about \$40 a year.

The millage would restore library services at the Auburn and Pinconning branches, as well as reopen the Sage Branch Library and put the Bookmobile back on the road. Hours and programs also would expand significantly.

- Ryan J. Stanton covers Bay County for The Times. He can be reached at 894-9645 or by e-mail at [rstanton@bc-times.com](mailto:rstanton@bc-times.com).

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## Christmas assistance program opens

News Update

### LAPEER COUNTY

#### THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Wednesday, October 10, 2007

#### Journal Staff Writer

LAPEER - Lapeer County families needing help to provide Christmas for their children may apply in person at the following locations.

Hispanic Service Center, 150 S. Almont in Imlay City from 9 a.m. to noon and 5-8 p.m. Oct. 18; Human Development Commission, 1559 Imlay City Road in Lapeer Township 9-11:30 a.m. and at the HDC commodity distribution at 425 County Center in Lapeer from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Oct. 23.

Department of Human Services, 1505 Suncrest Drive, Mayfield Township, 9:30-11:30 a.m. and 1:30-3:30 p.m., now through Oct. 31; North Branch Thrift Shop, 3965 Huron St., 12:30-3 p.m. Thursday and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday; Dryden Library, 5480 Main St., 10-a.m.-noon Oct. 27 and the United Way Help Center, 220 W. Nepessing St., room 205, noon-3 p.m. Monday and Oct. 22 and 29.

Proper identification must be presented by all family members along with proof of household income. Holiday Depot coordinates Lapeer County Christmas efforts by matching families with donors to even out donations. Deadline to apply is Nov. 1.

Compiled by Journal staff writer James L. Smith.

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JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
LANSING



ISMAEL AHMED  
DIRECTOR

## News Release

**Contact: Maureen Sorbet or Colleen Steinman (517) 373-7394**

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### Governor Granholm honors Child Support Month

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**Oct. 10, 2007**

LANSING – Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm has declared October Child Support Month in Michigan, recognizing a Department of Human Services program – carried out in partnership with local Friends of the Court and prosecuting attorneys – that supports strong families, reduces poverty and invests in children.

Our children are our most precious gift, and their well-being and family stability are essential to our strength as a state," Granholm said. "Child Support Month provides an opportunity to highlight the importance of supporting our families and making a real difference for Michigan's children."

Michigan's child support program collects and distributes more than \$1.4 billion each year – nearly \$27 million per week – providing greater financial security for children and their families and reducing the need for public assistance. More than 531,000 Michigan children were owed support in fiscal year 2006, and approximately 387,000 – 73 percent – received it.

"Child support is an important tool for addressing poverty in our state and helping low-income families and single parents remain self-sufficient," said Ismael Ahmed, director of the Michigan Department of Human Services. "Our goal is to ensure that every child who is owed child support receives it, so they can thrive, grow, and succeed."

The Office of Child Support has a long standing partnership with local Friends of the Court and prosecutors to establish paternity, enforce child support orders, locate parents, and collect and disburse payments.

"Child support is an investment parents make in their children's futures," said Marilyn Stephen, director of the Office of Child Support. "Paying child support is just one way both parents can be involved in their children's lives. Even if their parents don't live together, children need both parents to be involved and active in their lives."

**For more information, go to [www.michigan.gov/childsupport](http://www.michigan.gov/childsupport)**